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Apparent Time Anomalies in Transcript Raise the Possibility of Excisions; Jaworski Declines Comment

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WASHINGTON, May 6 Two seemingly casual comments by President Nixon and H. R. Haldeman on the time of day raise the possibility that part of one of the subpoenaed Presidential conversations has been unaccountably excised from the transcript of the session made public by the White House.

Early on the morning of Saturday, April 14, 1973, the President, Mr. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman gathered in Mr. Nixon's hideaway office next door to the White House to discuss ways of encouraging former Attorney General John N. Mitchell to tell the Watergate prosecutors what he knew about the unraveling cover-up of the bugging case.

At one point, according to the transcript, the President interrupted the discussion and apparently picked up the telephone to speak with Steve Bull, his appointments secretary, about an incoming engagement.

"Put that thing with Haig," Mr. Nixon told Mr. Bull. "What time you got now? Quarter after? I'll be there . . ."

Mr. Nixon did not mention the hour, but eight pages farther into the transcript Mr. Hadelman, then his chief of staff, announced that "it is 11 o'clock."

Although 45 minutes appear to have elapsed between the two remarks, it requires less than 10 minutes to read the eight pages of intervening dialogue aloud in a conversational manner, with ample time for reflective pauses.

Asked about this apparent discrepancy and about the transcript of an earlier conversation, on March 22, 1973, that seems to end before the recorded time of the meeting's conclusion, a White House spokesman replied that "substantial deletions are always noted in the transcripts."

Asked whether there were lesser deletions that were not noted, the spokesman said, "I honestly don't know."

He added that the White House "will be happy to look into your inquiry to see if there are errors in either the logs [of the times and participants of Presidential meetings] or the transcripts."

Conversational Styles

But there are also indications elsewhere in the massive volume of transcriptions submitted by Mr. Nixon to the House Judiciary Committee, which is considering his impeachment, that the conversational styles of the President and his aides do not square with the time allotted to this particular portion.

A second meeting between Mr. Nixon and Mr. Haldeman the same day, for example, also requires eight pages of transcript to recount. According to the White House volume, however, it lasted 18 minutes.

A meeting the following day between the President and Mr. Ehrlichman, which according to the transcript continued for 40 minutes, takes up 26 pages of transcript.

Both of these subsequent conversations contain the phase "material unrelated to Presidential actions deleted," which peppers the transcript here portions of conversations that Mr. Nixon believes irrelevant to the House's inquiry have been excised from the printed text.

No such deletions are noted, however, between the President's observation that it is "quarter after" the hour and Mr. Haldeman's pronouncement tha "11o'clock" has arrived.

A spokesman for special Watergate prosecutor, Leon Jaworski, who has subpoenaed from the White House the tape recording of the April 14 meeting and 63 other White House conversations, declined to comment when the apparent discrepancy between the length of the converstaion and the elapsed time was pointed out.

The special prosecutor's office also declined comment on a second apparent anomaly at the end of the transcript of a meeting on March 22, 1973, between the President, Mr. Halde man, Mr. Ehrlichman, Mr. Mitchell and John W. Dean,3d at the time the counsel to th President.

The tape of the meeting on March 22, the day after Mr. Dean disclosed to the President that the White House was being "blackmailed" by E. Howard Hunt Jr., has been surrendered to Mr. Jaworski by the White House in response to a subpoena brought by his predecessor, Archibald Cox.

According to the White House transcript made available to the judiciary committee, the crucial session began at 1:57 o'clock in the afternoon and ended at 34 minutes past three.

As the meeting drew to a close, the transcript shows, Mr. Mr. Nixon discussed with Mr. Haldeman and Mr. Ehrlichman, then hi domestic affairs adviser, his impending departure from Washington.

"Bob," he said to Mr. Haldeman, "what time is my take-off scheduled for Florida. Are you ready?"

Mr. Haldeman answered that he was, and the President replied, "Well, we won't ruch."

"It is 3:16," said Mr. Ehrlichman. "How about 15 or 20 minutes from now?"

Then the transcript ends.